



Social Security Administration



What You Should Know Before You Apply for SSI Disability Benefits for a Child



Children from birth up to age 18 may get Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. They must be disabled and they must have little or no income and resources. Here are answers to some questions people ask about applying for SSI for children.

• How does Social Security decide if a child is disabled?

Social Security has a strict definition of disability for children.

- The child must have a physical or mental condition(s) that very seriously limits his or her activities; **and**
- The condition(s) must have lasted, or be expected to last, at least 1 year or result in death.

A state agency makes the disability decision. They review the information you give us. They will also ask for information from medical and school sources and other people who know about the child.

If the state agency needs more information, they will arrange an examination or test for the child, which we will pay for.

• How can I get ready for the disability interview?

- Review this disability starter kit. It includes a checklist and a worksheet to help you gather the information you need. **Have this information with you at the time of the interview.**
- **If you have access to the Internet**, you can fill out a Child Disability Report at www.socialsecurity.gov/childdisabilityreport
- For more information visit our website at www.socialsecurity.gov/disability/ or call toll-free 1-800-772-1213 (for the deaf or hard of hearing, call TTY 1-800-325-0778).

• How does Social Security decide if a child can get SSI?

Children can get SSI if they meet Social Security's definition of disability for children and if they have little or no income and resources. We also consider the family's household income, resources and other personal information.

• How will I know what Social Security has decided?

We will send you a letter. It can take 3 to 5 months to decide a child's SSI disability claim. Let us know if your address or telephone number changes so that we can get in touch with you.

• Will my personal information be kept safe?

Yes. Social Security protects the privacy of those we serve. As a federal agency, we are required by the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 522a) to protect the information we get from you.

• What if I am more comfortable speaking in a language other than English?

We provide free interpreter services to help you conduct your Social Security business.

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Other important information

SSI is not a medical assistance program. Your state Medicaid agency, local health department, social services office or hospital can help you find your nearest health care agencies. Your Social Security office can also help you find health care agencies.

• Medicaid

Medicaid is a health care program for people with low incomes and limited resources. In most states, children who get SSI benefits can also get Medicaid. Even if the child cannot get SSI, he or she may be able to get Medicaid. Your state Medicaid agency, Social Security office or your state or county social services office can give you more information.

• State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)

Children may be able to get health insurance from SCHIP even if they do not get SSI. SCHIP provides health insurance to children from working families with incomes too high to get Medicaid, but who cannot afford private health insurance. SCHIP provides insurance for prescription drugs and for vision, hearing and mental health services in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Your state Medicaid agency can provide more information about SCHIP.

You can also go to www.insurekidsnow.gov/ or call toll free 1-877-KIDS-NOW (1-877-543-7669) for more information on your state's program.

• Other health care services

If the child is under age 16 and we decide he or she is disabled and can get SSI, we will refer him or her to your state children's agencies for social, developmental, educational and medical services. Even if the child cannot get SSI, these state agencies may be able to help him or her.

• Work opportunities for young people who are getting SSI

Many young people who get SSI disability benefits want to work. The following information may be helpful.

- We do not count most of a child's earnings when we figure the SSI payment. We count even less of a child's earnings if the child is a student.
- We subtract the cost of certain items and services that a child needs to work from his or her earnings in figuring the SSI payment.
- If a child is age 15 or older, he or she can establish a *Plan to Achieve Self-Support* (PASS). With a PASS, a child can set aside income for a work goal. We will not count this income when we figure the SSI payment.
- A child's Medicaid coverage can continue even if his or her earnings are high enough to stop SSI payment, as long as the earnings are under a certain amount.

Social Security has two programs that can assist young people who get SSI disability benefits and want to go to work:

- **Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program, and**
- **Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) program.**

Your local Social Security office can provide more information about these programs. You can also find more information on our Work website, www.socialsecurity.gov/work/.

Checklist – Childhood Disability Interview

You should have as much of the following information as possible **before your interview**. This is in addition to the items requested in the enclosed appointment letter. Be ready to give us your observations about the child's daily activities.

Keep your appointment, even if you do not have all of this information. We will help you get any missing information.

☒ **Check off the items below as you gather them for your interview.**

MEDICAL INFORMATION

- ☐ Name, address, and phone number of every doctor, therapist, hospital and clinic that has seen or treated the child for at least the last year.
- ☐ Any medical records you already have, including the dates the child was seen or treated and the child's patient ID number(s), if known.
- ☐ Medication(s) the child is taking. These can be found on the medicine containers.
- ☐ Child's medical assistance number, if any.

OTHER INFORMATION

- ☐ Names, addresses and phone numbers of any schools the child attended in the past 12 months, including the names of teachers, psychologists, counselors, speech and other therapists who have seen or treated the child.
- ☐ The child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for early intervention services or Individualized Education Program (IEP) for special education services, if the child has one; and any other school records that you may have.
- ☐ Names, addresses and phone numbers of any social service programs and the name of caseworkers that have information about the child.
- ☐ Name, address and phone number of another adult who helps care for the child and can help us get information, if necessary.
- ☐ Names, addresses and phone numbers of any employers the child has had.
- ☐ An original or certified copy of the child's birth certificate. If the child was born in another country, we also need proof of U.S. citizenship or legal residency.
- ☐ Names and Social Security Numbers for all the children and adults who live in the household.
- ☐ Proof of current income for the child and family members living in the household (for example, pay stubs, self-employment tax returns, unemployment or other program benefits, child support).
- ☐ Proof of resources for the child and parents living in the household (for example, bank account statements, life insurance policies, certificates of deposit, stocks or bonds).

The enclosed Medical and School Worksheet will help you collect the information you need for your interview.

MEDICAL AND SCHOOL WORKSHEET - CHILD

Completing this worksheet will help you get ready for the interview. It will also speed up the interview. We may ask for additional information. *If you need more space, use blank sheets of paper.*

A. Child's height and weight. _____

B. Name, address, phone number, and relationship of another adult who helps care for the child and can help us get information about the child if necessary.

C. The child's illnesses, injuries, or conditions. _____

D. When the child's condition(s) began. _____

E. How they affect the child's activities. _____

F. The child's current grade, if in school. _____

G. Schools or preschools the child is currently attending, and any other schools he or she attended in the last 12 months.

NAME	ADDRESS, ZIP CODE, and PHONE NUMBER	DATES ATTENDED	KIND(S) OF SPECIAL ED. SERVICES (if any)

H. Current teacher's name(s) and school. _____

I. School testing the child has had, such as tests for behavior or learning problems.

NAME OR KIND OF TEST	DATE(S)	NAME OF SCHOOL

J. Name of any school therapist the child is seeing or has seen (*for example, speech, physical, or occupational*) and the school name.

- K.** Hospitals, clinics, doctors, or therapists that have seen the child within at least the last 12 months.

NAME	ADDRESS, ZIP CODE, and PHONE NUMBER	PATIENT I.D. NUMBER	DATE FIRST SEEN	DATE LAST SEEN

- L.** Other agencies or programs that tested or examined the child, or that provided services (such as Headstart, Early Intervention Services or Special Education, Public or Community Health, Welfare or Social Service Agency, Mental Health/Mental Retardation Center).

NAME	ADDRESS, ZIP CODE, and PHONE NUMBER	KIND OF TEST OR SERVICE	DATE(S)

- M.** Medicine(s) the child takes, and the doctor's name if it is a prescribed medication.

NAME OF MEDICINE	PRESCRIBED BY

- N.** All medical tests the child had or will have for his or her illnesses, injuries or conditions. (For example, hearing test, vision test, IQ testing, blood tests, breathing tests, x-rays.)

NAME OF TEST	DATE(S)	WHERE DONE	WHO SENT CHILD FOR TEST